THE NEWS

no.1 a miscellany of fortean curiosities

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is a non-profit-making bi-monthly miscellany of Fortean notes and news. Edited and published by Robert JM Rickard: 31 Kingswood Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9AN.

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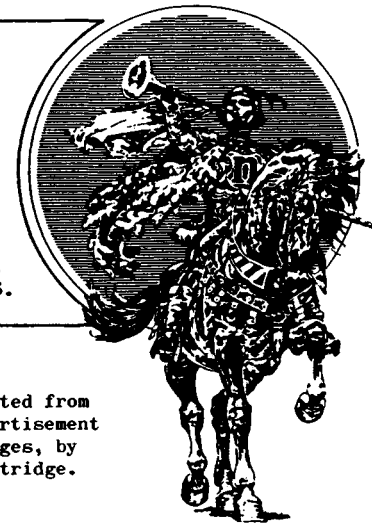

Cover: adapted from an old advertisement for Selfridges, by Bernard Partridge.

Welcome to the News, Britains first Fortean magazine. The omens have been good, and the public has been prepared for a magazine like this - but the core of our readers will be researchers and others interested in extrapolating the ideas of Charles Fort.

Many people are under the impression, from reading the variety of fringe fortean books currently flooding the market, that anomalous and enigmatic phenomena are rare, and even more rarely reported. We can draw no conclusions about incidence (though some work has been done on Fort's data to determine cycles of incidence) - but this magazine will be testimony to the papers being as full of the damned stuff now as they were when Fort ruined his eyes in the British Museum.

He was quite definite on this point: "... I never write about marvels. The wonderful, or the never-before-heard-of, I leave to whimsical or radical fellows. All the books by me are of quite ordinary occurrences...But it is not that I take numerous repetitions as a standard for admission. The fellow who found the pearl in the oyster stew - the old fiddle that turned out to be a Stradivarius - the ring lost in a lake, and then what should be found when a fish is caught - but these often repeated yarns are conventional yarns. And almost all liars are conventionalists....But when I come upon the unconventional repeating, in times and places far apart, I feel - even though I have no absolute standards to judge by - that I am outside the field of ordinary liars." (Wild Talents. V.)

And that, for those of you who have asked, is the reason behind our quiet, unassuming, unsensational name - the contents are preposterous enough without blatant hysteria.

The News will function more or less like a 'news clipping agency', except that our clients are also our clippers - in that way we cover a wide field, especially in the local regional papers which should carry fresher stories. Besides contributing cuttings, we would like to ask our readers to take the opportunity to verify any local stories (we will even publish their findings gladly). But remember - we are not in the business of offering truths, only leads and clues for those of you who thrill to the chase, and even the armchair philosophers. Credit is given as a matter of course wherever possible - and all uncredited items are from the editor's own files. If you need to quote from our pages, no permission is needed, just an acknowledgement.

The whole business of the categories is arbitrary - some stories clearly belong in several categories simultaneously. In this matter, and in the general running of the mag. we will impose our opinions with reluctance, and where necessary ,briefly.

Lastly, we hope the response to this first issue will allow us to expand next issue to include, among other things, readers' letters and reviews of books that arrived too late for inclusion in this issue.

Skyward Ho!

change to bi-monthly publication

The editor sincerely regrets to announce a slight change in the schedule proposed for the NEWS. Because of many factors, not the least being the daily pressures of earning a living, the NEWS will be published bi-monthly and not monthly as planned and announced in our publicity. The price will remain £1.80. for a year's subscription; and single copies including those on public sale will cost 35p each. Those of you who have kindly paid the full amount under the impression that there were to be 12 issues per year, are asked to bear with us. The editor hope that you will agree that this was preferable to any compromise on the volume of Fortean content, or quality of printing - or editing (whatever that is!).

aerial curiosities

KESTREL MAKES TERROR ATTACK ON KIDS.

The village children were thrilled when a kestrel perched on a pavilion above their playground. But minutes later they scattered in terror as the young bird of prey swooped down on them. The bird, with razor sharp talons, attacked about a dozen screaming boys and girls in the playground at Haxby, near York. Frightened mothers also raced for safety as the kestrel 'buzzed' the playground for two hours.

As police arrived, garage manager Dennis Bellerby, 35, lured the bird to the ground using bacon as bait. Then he threw a coat over the kestrel and placed the bird in a cardboard box. Yesterday it was in captivity in York's RSPCA home for unwanted and stray dogs. Bill Stericker, who runs the dogs home, said yesterday:"The kestrel is a bit of a problem. It should be out in the wild, and eventually we will have to free it."

Sun. 7 Aug 73.

THE CROP EATERS.

A Massive invasion of diamond-bat moths from the continent is attacking crops in Lincolnshire.

Daily Mirror. 13 Aug 73.

VAMPIRES SHORT OF BLOOD.

Vampire bats at Houston zoological gardens USA, are getting thirsty. Because of the meat shortage their supply of beef blood (£1.20/gallon) has stopped. Curator Richard Quick said that the beef packer who supplied the bats' monthly blood ration had closed. They would have to wait for local hospitals to discard human blood.

Sunday Mirror. 8 Aug 73.
Credit: A Smith.

WAR IN THE AIR.

A fox, carried high in the air by a golden eagle in Austria,buried its teeth into the eagle's throat. Both crashed to their death.

Sunday Mirror. 3 June 73.

animal curiosities

HELLO - AND GOODBYE.

A gamekeeper at Murau, Austria, shot the first wolf to be seen in the country for 30 years.

Sunday Mirror. 2 Sept 73.

GINGER PIGLETS.

Striped ginger piglets have been bred by crossing a wild boar and Tamworth sows to give an Iron Age village project at Little Buster, near Petersfield, Hampshire, authentic Iron Age swine.

Reading Evening POST. 3 Aug 73.

ANIMAL THEATRICALS?

Our dog, Armstrong, is not exactly renowned for his bravery and will only put on a show when he is assured of an audience. But after my experience the other night, I wonder whether other animals act up just for the benefit of humans.

I looked out onto the lawn which is partially lit by a nearby street lamp. There I saw a large dog fox strolling slowly toward the fruit trees. Following closely, was our cat, Microbe, and behind in Indian file was Armstrong. All three were quite contentedly sniffing their way along apparantly without a care in the world.

I stepped on to the patio to get a closer look and all three animals saw me. It was only then that Armstrong, aware no doubt that he was not being a proper dog, suddenly turned and barked half-heartedly at the fox. The fox trotted off into the hedge and Microbe leaped into the air and ran into the house.

MARLENE DOVE.
Croham Valley Road,
South Croydon, Surrey.

Letters to the Editor.
Sunday Express. 2 Sept 73.

COWS HOLE A HELICOPTER.

A herd of cows took a fancy to a BEA helicopter in a field at Malden, Essex, when the pilot Captain Dick Hensen left the machine for a few minutes to make a telephone call.

When he returned he found most of the plane's paint licked off - and the perspex cockpit cover holed by a horn. The helicopter had to be taken out of service.

Sunday Express. 2 Sept 73.

HIPPO WHO GOT THE GOAT.

The Hippo was fed up with the zoo routine, so he and his pal the goat went for a walk one night. Startled Policemen in Las Vegas later found the goat and his 2 ton friend strolling down the highway out of town...and took them quietly home.

Daily Mirror 27 July 73.

SNAKE IN THE SAND BITES SEASIDE GIRL.

A holiday romp at the seaside landed little Gail Harwood in hospital last night - with a snake bite. Gail, 10, was bitten on her left leg by an adder while playing in the sand dunes at Winterton, Norfolk.

Last August Bank Moliday Monday, another holiday maker at Winterton spent two weeks in hospital after being bitten on the hand.

Daily Mirror. 28 Aug 73.

A DUCK WAS OUT FOR BOB.

While Bob Crowthall of The Broadway, Bournemouth, was sharing his sandwiches with ducks in a local park, one of them reared up and pecked a piece out of his nose. He said:"I was amazed those birds could be such little monsters."

Sunday Express. 2 Sept 73.

IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE A POLICEMAN HOPPING MAD.

A big police hunt is on...for two wallabies on the run. The wallabies, smaller versions of the Kangaroo, escaped from Heathfield Safari Park, Sussex. Now one of them has been spotted leaping over hedges near Hawkhurst in Kent.

Mr Julian Moore, 18, who works at the safari park owned by his father, Dr. Gerald Moore, explained that they are not really dangerous but have a tendency to kick. He said :"We have a devil of a job keeping them from vaulting the enclosures. We keep on building higher fences - but once a wallaby, even a small one, decides he's going, it's pretty hard to change his mind. The two missing animals are about 3ft. 6in. high and greyish-brown."

Sunday Mirror. 2 Sept 73.

appearances

KILLER SNAKE HUNTED BY PARK GUNMEN.

A 4ft. South American cobra, which has venom that can kill in 20 minutes, is still on the loose in Windsor Great Park. Visitors were warned to keep to paths as keepers with shotguns searched for the killer snake. It was seen by four people in the Savill Ornamental Gardens yesterday before rearing up to display a four-inch 'hood' and sliding off into the undergrowth. It is still a mystery how it got there.

A Windsor police official said: "From the description and checks we have made with experts at Regents Park Zoo we are satisfied it is a South American Cobra."

Express & Star. 23 July 73.
Credit: A Smith. Steve Moore sent a cutting from Daily Mirror (same date) which only added that the cobra was brown and female.

archaeology

BRAVELY RISKING ANTAGONISING THE MAFIOSI IN THE Italian-American Civil Rights Association, who regard Columbus as their founding member, an archaeologist is pushing the theory that America was discovered by the Chinese 4000 years ago. He claims that ancient maps that he has translated had California labled as the 'Land of Gentlemen', and Britain down as 'Fair Maiden Country'.

Daily Mail. 14 July 73.
Credit: Steve Moore.

A BRIGHT NEW IMAGE FOR STONE-AGE MAN.

French archaeologists have begun the task of changing public opinion about the character of our remote ancestors - the 'apemen' of Stone Age times.

High on a hill near the village of Thonac (Dordogne), the French have built a new centre devoted to prehistoric culture, including cave drawings, statuettes and engravings collected or copied from every part of the world. In the grounds roam species of bison, deer and wild horse, which have changed little in thousands of years.

The centre, called Le Thot (now open to tourists was designed by Paris architect Denis Soulie, himself a keen archaeologist. He says: "The purpose of Le Thot is to present our remote ancestors in a more kindly light. The popular notion is that they were all ill-tempered savages who went about snarling and attacking one-another on sight. But this could hardly have been so. We believe the evidence of the painted caves found in different parts of the world points to the fact that Dawn age man had a sensitive and even reverent side to his nature."

Sunday Express. 26 Aug 73.

bodies

STORE BODY RIDDLE.

Police found the mutilated body of a young man in a yard behind Boots store in Derby yesterday. The premises had been evacuated after a hoax call that a bomb was due to go off.

Daily Express. 1 Sept 73.

MAN DEAD 10 YEARS FOUND IN BED.

The fully clothed body of a skeleton was found in a bed at a terraced house in East London yesterday, by a man who went to inspect the roof after heavy rainfall. Murder Squad detectives were called but after a post-mortem last night it was discovered the man, later identified as William Blackhally, had died of natural causes nearly 10 years ago.

Neighbours thought that he had moved and left his wife. But yesterday, Geoffrey Wilson, 18, who had rented the downstairs flat in Liddingroad, West Ham, found his skeleton. Also in the house was Mrs. Violet Blackhally, who was given medical attention.

Daily Express. 22 Sept 73.

BODY FOUND IN BURNT OUT FIELD.

The charred body of missing Eastern Electricity foreman Stanley Albert Seymour was found yesterday in a burnt-out cornfield in Brentwood, Essex, after an all night search. Police said 63-year-old Mr. Seymour of Charles St, Epping, died of a heart attack before his body was burnt.

Daily Express. 5 Sept 73.

'BODY IN SEA' SCOUT IS IGNORED.

Boy Scout Roger Sargant, 13, was ignored when he swam to a crowded beach yesterday and yelled that he had found a body. Roger tried for three minutes to explain that there was a dead man in the sea at Shoreham, Sussex.

Then he ran to a friend's house and phoned the police who later pulled out the body. Roger of Old Fort Rd, Shoreham, said later: "I don't think anyone believed me."

Daily Mirror, 27 Aug 73.

ITS NOT GETTY.

Police today said a clubbed, strangled, bullet-riddled and burned body found near Rome was not Paul Getty III, missing grandson of the oil tycoon.

Daily Express. 28 Aug 73.

DEAD MAN FROM MISSING FASTNET SLOOP.

A man whose body was picked up from the sea by the crew of a tanker and taken to Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, on Wednesday, has been identified as one of the three members of the crew of a sloop missing while on her way from the Irish Republic to take part in the Fastnet race.

He was Mr Felix Desmond Morris, 28, of Morville, Co. Donegal, who was on board the Grannaile when she was reported missing. She has still not been found.

Times. 18 Aug 73.

dead herrings

Unfortunately the original reference has been lost, but the oblique reference to the smoking remains of a pop singer found in the desert had caught our eye. A few days later however the story below was disclosed and some of the mystery cleared. We publish stories in this section mainly as guides that show how a press appearance seems to imply a mystery by only presenting a few facts, and probably the more sensational ones at that. Nevertheless, as Forteans we cannot ignore the improbable on being faced with even blatant sensationalism, without a knowledge of the facts (and if we are really being honest, refraining from forming any opinions).

POP STAR BODY SNATCH CHARGE.

Police have arrested a rock music manager alleged to have taken part in the bizarre body-snatching and cremation of Gram Parsons, former lead singer with 'The Byrds'. They claimed that Philip Clarke Kaufman, 38, the dead singer's road manager, hi-jacked Parson's body from Los Angeles airport in an old black hearse last Thursday and drove it to the desert where it was set on fire.

Parsons, 27, a former singer with the Byrds and the 'Flying Burrito Brothers', died in a desert motel at Joshua Tree, near Los Angeles, a week ago, apparently from a heart attack. After an autopsy, his body was taken to the airport to be flown back to New Orleans.

Police claim that two men - one dressed in cowboy clothes and with a patch marked 'Sin City' the name of Parsons recent hit song, on his vest - waylaid the car carrying the body, and drove off with it in the hearse.

Birmingham Evening Mail. 27 Sept 73.

ONE IN THE EYE FOR THE DISBELIEVERS.

Sofia: The complete skeleton of a cyclops - the one-eyed creature of Greek muthology - has been discovered by Bulgarian archaeologists, an official report from Sofia claims.

The discovery was made during excavations near Razlog in south-western Bulgaria. The skull, it is claimed, had only one eye socket which was placed directly over the nose and the skeleton measured 5ft 11in.

Sunday Express. 12 Aug 73.
Credit: A. Smith.

The News phoned the Bulgarian Embassy on the 17th. and was asked to try again later for the Press Secretary. The second time, we were told that more details were on their way from Bulgaria, and would be forwarded to us when they arrived. But the only thing that came through was the following cryptic and puzzling note dated 28 Aug 73:

" With reference to your telephone call, concerning the report in the 'Gardian' (sic) newspaper of a 'cyclops' being unearthed in Bulgaria we checked this matter with the authorities in Bulgaria. We have now received their reply and are informed that this report is untrue and was the mistake of one of the local correspondents."

If the report were true, then we can understand the Bulgarian's embarrassment at the hostility this discovery would inevitably release, and at the risk of appearing too credulous, deciding to issue a denial. On the other hand we find ourselves a trifle credulous and note our disappointment. INFO Journal 11. carries a few notes on the congenital condition of 'cyclopia'.

deaths & attacks

DIVING SUIT BAN AFTER DEATH RIDDLE.

Breathing equipment used by an American company's North Sea oil divers has been withdrawn for tests after a diver died. Fears that a temporary fault may have caused the death of Paul Havlena, 29, will be investigated, it was announced yesterday.

Havlena, an American, died when his lungs burst on a routine pipe-laying job 320 feet down. Two divers with him survived. An official of Taylor Diving said: "Havlena's death may have been caused by faulty equipment, human error, or both".

Daily Mirror. 1 Sept 73.

An earlier account in the Daily Mirror for 29 August 73, said that Havlena was returning, apparently normally, to a diving bell when his companions heard him cry out feebly: "Help me... help me." 'They got him into the bell, but he was dead. Later officials said that nothing appeared wrong with his gear.'

DEATH RIDDLE OF 151b BOY.

Police and welfare officials were yesterday investigating the death of a four-year-old boy who weighed only 15½lb. Anormal weight at that age is between 36 and 441b.

The boy, Max Piazzani, died in Basildon Hospital, Essex, on Saturday. He was admitted on Thursday after a fall at his home in Long Meadow Drive, Wickford. The investigation revealed that Max fractured his skull in an accident two years ago. An Essex County Council official said yesterday: "This incident could have led to an organic condition which in turn might have resulted in malnutrition."

Dr. Frederico Piazzani, Max's father said: "The boy ate like a horse, but there was something wrong inside which meant he could not digest his food. We did not know what his illness was, and the doctors did not tell us - if they knew. We have had four years of the most terrible anxiety with him. It could have been an accident in his infancy or he could have been born with this condition."

Sun. 7 Aug 73.

The editor's underlining.

THE CRAZED LODGER. Some of you may remember the case not long ago in which David McGreavy, a 21-year-old lodger in the house of Mrs. Elsie Ralph, savagely murdered her three children by wire, razor and pickaxe. Police said: "No investigating officer has ever had to witness such a scene of indescribable horror." The slaughter took place in April and was discovered by the children's parents, and a policeman later found the children's bodies impaled on the railings of a neighbours house, in Gillam Street, Worcester.

At the risk of being labled ghoulish, we note with a cautious amount of curiosity, the folincidental reference in the Daily Mirror, 31 July 73, by reporter Paul Connew:

'The house where the three children died had been linked with death before. A young couple who lived there moved after their baby suffocated in a cot. Just after World War II, a man who had been brought up in the house, moved to a new home a few streets away. There he went berserk - and killed his wife and children.'

POLICE HUNT BIRDS KILLER.

Detectives were yesterday hunting the killer of 13 prize pigeons worth £300 owned by fancier Fred Simpson, of Hobart Road, Cambridge, who said yesterday: "Whoever is responsible must be hopelessly twisted and insane."

Daily Express. 28 Aug 73.

DEATH RIDDLE OF GAMEKEEPERS.

Police were last night investigating reports of a shotgun duel between two gamekeepers which ended in death for both of them on the vast estate of Guiness brewery chairman, the Earl of Iveagh, in Eriswell, Suffolk. They were found at dusk on Saturday in a field near Rakenheath Farm. The men, John Messelis and Jack Brunning, both 53, had worked on the estate for many years.

They were near neighbours in the Victorian estate worker's cottages in Eriswell. Gossip was rife among families in the closely-knit hamlet last night. One estate employee said: "It has come as a terrible shock. There was no vendetta as far as we know." Both men were married and had children. Post mortems will be held today.

Daily Express, 6 Aug 73.

DUEL THEORY.

Police believe they have disproved a theory that two Eriswell, Suffolk, gamekeepers died in a duel on Saturday, because the fatal shots came from one gun.

Daily Express. 7 Aug 73.

MURDER IN PAIRS.

Two women - both aged thirty - were found murdered less than a mile apart yesterday. Pathologist's reports revealed they apparently died within hours of each other. But detectives said last night the murders were not linked - just a bizarre coincidence.

Nightshift worker Frederick O'Neil, 27, spotted Nancy Donaghue's body at 6.30am as he walked past the Wagon & Horses public house in Balsall Heath, Birmingham. She had been kicked and beaten about the face and neck in a 'violent struggle'. Ten minutes earlier, Mrs. June Rosser, who had been strangled, was discovered in Sandford Road, Moseley by Miss Joyce Downing, 49, who was calling her pet cat.

In Essex, a murder-scale hunt was launched after two other women were found battered to death. They were Mrs. Irish Thompson, wife of a city banker, and her widowed mother, 79-year-old Mrs Caroline Woodcock. Detective-Chief Superintendant Len White, head of Essex CID, who is leading the hunt at Coombe Rise, Shenfield, said: "It seems like a killing by someone who has gone berserk."

Daily Express. 12 Sept 73.

KANGEROOS KILLED.

Thirteen tame kangeroos were found slaughtered today in their enclosure at Sydney's Waratah Animal reserve. One appeared to have been shot and others battered or mauled to death. Park officials said they believed a big dog had been among the killers, as a large paw mark was found nearby.

Express & Star. 3 April 70.

DOG KILLED KANGAROOS.

The fifteen kangaroos believed to have been killed by gunmen in a Sydney park last week were in fact the victims of a large dog, Australian police said yesterday. The park is the home of Skippy, the famous TV kangaroo - but he was in a special compound when the dog attacked, and so was unhurt.

Daily Mirror. 6 April 70.
Credit: both above items - A Smith.

The materialisation of two extra carcases seems to have gone unnoticed in the hubbub, and we are amused by the notion of Mr. Smith of a search for a one-legged dog with a gun.

LAST-CHAPTER RIDDLE OF NOVELIST'S DEATH.

The mystery novelist Ann Quin's death could have come from one of her books. A man fishing at night on Brighton beach saw Miss Quin, 37, strip off and wade out to her death, an inquest was told last night.

Next day her body was found floating two miles out in the channel. But the Deputy Coroner at the Shoreham, Sussex, inquest, Mr. Mark Calvert Lee, said there was no way of knowing whether she intended to commit suicide. He recorded an open verdict on Miss Quin, of Lewes Crescent, Brighton. She had written four books, and several TV plays. She was described at the inquest as excitable and tempramental, with a furious temper.

Daily Express. 14 Sept 73.

disappearances

RIDDLE OF THE TOOTHLESS NUDE.

A man's complete outfit of clothes and a full set of false teeth were found by police investigating cries in the night at the cemetary by St. Mary's Church, Felling, Co. Durham. But there was no sign of the owner. A senior officer said: "There are no reports of anyone looking suspiciously undressed."

Daily Mirror. 28 Aug 73.
Credit: Robert Forrest.

MYSTERY OF LITTLE GIRL LOST.

One of the most intensive hunts ever known in Britain is going on to trace a nine-year-old girl. Police say it is a murder investigation, but so far there is no evidence of a killing. More than 24,000 people have been questioned in the search for red-haired Christine Markham. Helicopters, sub-aqua teams and dogs have been brought in - but there is not a single clue as to what happened to her.

A police officer heading the investigation at Scunthorpe, Lincs, told me:"A crank suggested she'd been picked up by a flying saucer. I know thats absurd, but the fact is this girl seems to have vanished into thin air. It's baffling."

She stayed out on the night of Monday, 12 May, and was last seen running down a street only a few yards from her home, at nearly ten past eleven. It had rained very heavily earlier in the evening. Det. Inspector Gordon Cairns said "There have been close discussions also with Norfolk CID who still have an 'open file' on the disappearance of 13-year-old April Fabb in 1969, though police do not think there is a connection." Police searched every house in the area of Christine's home in Robinson Road, Scunthorpe - without warrants. They looked in lofts and under floorboards, handed out 24,000 questionnaires and took 1,400 statements - but have been unable to discover any clues.

News of the World. 12 Aug 73. Condensed from a much larger feature by Graham Maclean.

esp

CAN CATS READ THE SECRETS OF YOUR MIND?

Cats are notoriously aloof. They appear to regard all human activity with disdain. But once a cat decides to throw in his lot with you he will often go to extraordinary lengths to prove it. Should you be insensitive enough to give your pet to somebody else the chances are that he will soon be back even if it means travelling miles across unfamiliar country. Of course, it might be your house rather than you that your cat is missing.

Cats are very much averse to moving and it often happens that when a family ups sticks and goes to a new address taking him with them,their cat finds it hard to believe they have been so foolish. He just has to go back to the old place and make sure it is deserted. But just how cats find their way back is a mystery, one in which scientists have shown surprisingly little interest.

Some research however has been carried out at the Institute of Parapsychology, in Durham, North Carolina, where scores of cat-journey stories have been collected and investigated. One story concerns a cat called Smokey, easily recognisable by a dark red tuft on his head, who leapt from the family car en route to a new home and two weeks later showed up at his old home. He stayed around for a few days and disappeared. Months later he turned up on the porch of the family's new home, looking very bedraggled. Parapsychologists reckon this is a clear example of a cat's ability to navigate by extra-sensory-perception, since Smokey had never seen the family's new home.

This may also have been what guided another cat called Whisky, last month. Whisky, who had been given away, pussyfooted 150 miles in 25 days from Cambridge to Bingley, Yorkshire, to get back where he started from. But even that was no world record. Lost or abandoned cats have been known to travel several times that distance, taking months over it, in an effort to resume their old way of life.

Whether they become more attatched to a particular family or a particular place has never been scientifically determined,but zoologists reckon that

on balance it is the place that matters most to the cat. An experiment carried out by two German neuro-physiologists went a fair way to establishing that cats have a strong homing instinct, but how it worked they could not say.

They took a group of household cats out to a rural area they had never seen before and released them one by one in a special maze with 24 exits pointing in different directions. Within an hour eight of the animals had located the exit pointing toward their home and were soon happily on their way.

One experiment tried at the Institute of Parapsychology involved two sealed containers, one empty and one filled with food placed a few yards away from a selection of hungry cats in a bare room. The animals could not see the food and all smells were eliminated both from the containers which were identical, and from the surroundings. Nevertheless the majority went unerringly to the filled container. There was absolutely nothing the researchers could see to guide the animals in their choice. The only possibility seemed to be that they were using telepathy to pick up thought waves from the researchers themselves.

Sunday Express. 16 Sept 73. By Robert Chapman.

A TWIN FEARS FOR HER LOST SISTER.

Housewife Mrs. Margaret Cassells and her twin sister were very close to one another. Not only did they look and talk alike but they often thought and acted in a similar way. Then five months ago, Mrs. Cassells' sister, 34-year-old Mrs. Ann Law, vanished. Now Mrs. Cassells says that she reluctantly believes her to be dead.

At her home in Beadling Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, she said: "I knew the night Ann disappeared that something was wrong, even though I was at my own home. We always could sense each other's feelings and thoughts. I have lived in hope these past few months but now I have to admit I think she might be dead.

"Just a month before Ann went missing, I decided to prepare the hall for decorating. Later that day I met my sister and she told me she had done the same thing - at precisely the same time. It was the same when we were youngsters. Ann went to hospital with appendicitis and I suffered from the same agony, although the doctor said there was nothing wrong.

Mrs. Law who lived at Denton Square, Newcastle, vanished a few days before her divorce became absolute on April 2. She is believed to have taken about £70 in cash and the clothes she was wearing. Efforts by police and family to trace her have failed. Mrs. Cassells and her husband travelled to London to search for Mrs. Law and visited an Essex public house about which she had once talked. But there was no trace of her.

Mrs. Law's former husband, Gilbert, 37, a ship's engineer, who was at home at the time of his wife's disappearance, has now gone back to sea. A police spokesman at Newcastle said: "We are keeping an open mind about her disappearance and our inquiries are continuing."

Sunday Express. 16 Sept 73.

falls

THE DAY IT RAINED FROGS.

From Letter Page:

"I wonder if any readers recall the following incident. I am not sure of the year, but I think it was either 1954 or 1955. It was in early June and a Royal Navy display was held on the Meadow Platt just inside the (Sutton) park.

I attended this display with my young son and daughter. It was a Saturday and there were frequent heavy showers. When we had visited all the exhibitions, we decided to have a quick look at the fair, which at that time was permanently situated between Meadow Platt and Windley Pool.

Whilst we were waiting there, we tried to shelter from a shower under the trees which fringed the patch, when we were bombarded by tiny frogs, which seemed to come down with the rain. There were literally thousands of them. They descended on our umbrellas, on us and we were afraid to walk for fear of treading on them. When we relate it to anyone we receive incredulous disbelieving looks.

I would like to know if there are any people who also witnessed this event (there were lots of folk around us), and would appreciate it if they would write either to yourpaper or to me, and thus confirm our experience. Maybe there is a naturalist among your readers who could explain this phenomenon."

S. MOWDAY (Mrs.)
Bodorgan, Conway Old Road,
Capellilo, Penmaenmawr. Caerns.

The Sutton News. 3 Aug 73.
Credit: Cathy Purcell.

The News was very interested to receive this data and wrote to Mrs. Mowday, asking her to let us know if she should hear from others. On the 3rd Sept she kindly forwarded the following from Mr. John W. Pitman:-

Whilst I cannot confirm the 'Rain of Frogs' in 1954 or 1955, I did have a similar experience in 1944.

As you know D Day was near and the public were asked not to clutter up the roads and railways during the summer. So my wife, Caroline, our 2 children and myself went by Midland Red bus from Yardley, Birmingham, to the small village of Hopwas, along the Lichfield Road. When passing Whittington Barracks (then occupied by the Americans), we were caught in a shower of rain, which also contained many hundreds of frogs.

I can only surmise that they were caught up by a current of air from the low lying fields by the river at Tamworth, then deposited on the

relatively higher area at Whittington."
Letter dated 18 Aug 73.

The occurrence of two falls of frogs so geographically close to each other in the Midlands just north of Birmingham is worthy of note, even if they are ten years apart. A letter from Mr. Pitman brought out a few more details:

"1) The incident took place in August 1944, at about 10.00 or 11.00 am.
2) Weather conditions, hot sun, blue sky with several seperated masses of cumulus clouds, showery.
3) Several flights of flying fortresses had passed in the previous hour flying Eastward.
4) Location, on the A51 road between Tamworth and Lichfield, exactly opposite the Whittington Barracks. This spot is 320 ft. above mean sea level. As you will see on an Ordinance map, there is a canal, lake, river or reservoir within 1-2½ miles radius.
5) Prior to the heavy shower of rain the road was completely clear. When the shower began, shelter was taken under a tree. Whilst I cannot say I actually saw frogs fall, the road and path became covered with living frogs whereas the dry area under the tree remained clear.
6) I guess the size of frogs was approximately 15mm overall. As it was a hot day, soon after the rain stopped the well drained dried quickly, leaving the gutters still flowing with water. It was noticed that the frogs jumped from the drier areas to the gutter or to any puddles that were left. "

So far the editor has only been able to establish (subject to confirmation from Mrs. Mowday) that the date of her incident is likely to have been either the 12th or the 14th of June 1954. A search through the weekly reports of the Birmingham Observatory (primarily a weather recording institution) failed to turn up any record of either Mrs Mowday's or Mr. Pitman's event. But during the search in the Birmingham Evening Mail for June 1954 (here also there was no report) we came across the following items for the same period as Mrs. Mowday's fall - we can offer no correlation other than their coincidence in time:

* A black swan disappears from the estate of Sir Winston Churchill at Westerham in Kent, on June 1. On the 11th June a black swan which turned up near Uden in Holland was reported to be a completely different one.

* On the 8th June we find a report that 8000 racing pigeons vanished completely on their way from Milford Haven in Wales to Northern Ireland. Only 15 turned up at their destination totally exhausted, and six more in the same condition were found at Swansea. We note in passing that we have quite a few clippings on the disappearance of large flocks of birds.

* The 14th June edition carried the note that the police of Metz, France, were asking the British police to help identify an 18-year-old girl amnesia victim who was found exhausted on the road at Auten-le-Tiche and taken to Micheville hospital. She was capable of speech only in monosyllables and wrote a note:"Vincent Howard, Mimosa Gardens Avenue, London." She indicated that the man was her father and and an Army captain, and she had a brother who was an airman. Her own address she gave as 54 Butcher St, London.

A foot-note to the report added that there seemed to be only one Mimosa Street in the London area, in Fulham, and no Vincent Howard could be found there. Similarly, the reporter could find no Butcher Street in London.

So here's another mystery for some enterprising researcher to unravel.

FREAK STORM SHOWERS VILLAGE WITH TOADS.

Toulon, Sept 23 - Tens of thousands of small toads fell on the southern France village of Brignoles in a freak storm today. They probably had been sucked up into the clouds by recent tornadoes - Agence France Presse.

Times. 24 Sept 73.
Credit: Steve Moore, Michael Balfour.

Those of you who are not familiar with the phenomena of falls of objects from the sky, we refer you to Fort's Book of the Damned in the first place. The explanation that the objects were 'sucked' up by some freak wind is a most common one - but does not explain the extraordinary selection that goes on. Often the fish, toads, worms, whatever are of the same size; or in the same state, living or dead; or uniformly of the same species (often completely foreign to within thousands of miles - and if they did stay up there, 'tens of thousands' of them, by some means, how could they stay alive for that time?).

On top of that is the similar phenomenon, as pointed out by Fort, of the apports and precipitations of stones, buckshot, blood, water, oil, or coals, etc. in connections with poltergeist and other forms of haunting.

fires

CAR BLAZE DEATH RIDDLE.

A man died in a mystery car blaze on a busy main road in Birmingham last night. The young woman driver was dragged out by passers-by and taken to hospital in Birmingham.

The car suddenly burst into flames on Coventry Road, near the Sandy Lane traffic lights. Among people who rushed to help was a West Indian wearing a blue shirt who helped pull the woman clear. Before he dissappeared without giving a name, he told people in the crowd that he could not get the man from the passenger seat because the seat belt was still clipped in position.

Minutes later the two-year-old Austin 1300 was a charred wreck. As police investigations began, traffic was diverted in both directions.

Sunday Mercury. 19 Aug 73.

BLAZES PROBE.

Police continued enquiries today into unexplained fires which twice in four days damaged a garden shed behind a house in Armoury Road, Small Heath.

Birmingham Evening Mail. 13 Sept 73.

SICK MAN IN BLAZE HOUSE.

Birmingham firemen, called to a house in Severn Road, Hall Green, put out a number of fires in the premises. A man living at the house was taken out of the premises by neighbours. He was thought to be ill and was later taken to hospital.

Sunday Mercury. 16 Sept 73.

I'M NO FIREBUG - I DON'T EVEN SMOKE.

As detectives hunted a murderous firebug, a 33-year-old security guard complained: "The police are harassing me because fires follow me around" writes Charles Sandell. He explained that by coincidence he had been near the scene of "six or eight" of the firebugs blazes.

Mr. Anthony Evans, who has worked as a security guard for ten years, said that he had been questioned a number of times. Now he has telephoned Scotland Yard to protest about being harassed.

The arson rampage has terrorised the Forest Gate, Stratford and Canning Town areas of London, with 15 fires in the past two weeks. Two cars, two vans, a motor-boat on a trailer, a pillar box, a church, a school gymnasium and tuck shop were among the targets.

And the search turned into a murder hunt last Tuesday. Then three men died as the firebug threw petrol into the Tudor Hotel, Stratford, and set fire to it.

Mr. Evans, who lives with his wife and tree children in Garvary Road, Canning Town said: "Recently fires seem to happen wherever I go. They literally follow me around. The police seem to think I had something to do with starting them. It's ridiculous. I don't smoke. I don't carry matches. I think the police have got it in for me and are trying to frame me for the fires!"

He told me that he first got close to one of the spate of blazes when he was driving home, and saw a church on fire in Upton Lane, Forest Gate. "I was about to call the fire brigade when I heard a fire engine coming. Then I was near the £1000 motor boat which went up in flames, though I didn't see this until it was all over.

"Three of the fires have broken out near my home. Its just coincidence that I happened to be around at the time. But I've had absolutely nothing to do with starting them." Mr. Evans added that he had given up his job as a security guard with a local firm because of the fires. "If I'd been able to pass the educational requirements, I might have become a fireman. I like fire-fighting and did some part-time training with the auxiliary service at Whitechapel seven years ago."

A senior detective at Forest Gate police station denied that Mr. Evans had been harassed. He said "In such a grave situation, it is our duty to question anyone who may know something about the fires." Mr. Evans had been questioned two or three times, but so had other people.

News of the World. 2 Sept 73.

MYSTERY BLAST.

Crime scientists are investigating the cause of a mystery explosion and fire which destroyed the assembly hall of Rednock comprehensive school at Dursley, Gloucestershire.

Daily Mail. 27 Aug 73.

fish curiosities

CARP AT DEPTFORD.

A 5lb carp rescued from a tidal stretch on the Thames at Deptford Creek in London was revived and released at Greenwich Pier.

Times. 18 Aug 73.

THE WRITING ON THE FISH.

A branch of the National Westminster Bank is guarding a magic fish, which was bought in a Dar-Es-Salaam market eight years ago.

It is 5½ inches long and has Arabic writing on a fin. When deciphered it reads: "Divine Universal truth. There none but God to be worshipped." (Sic).

An expert said the writing could not possibly have been put on the tail of the Butterfly fish by human efforts.

It was sent to London by the Moslem who bought it, and has since been exhibited around the world. The man now in charge of the fish is living in Perivale while trying to find a suitably splendid place to exhibit the thing.

London Evening News. 15 Aug 73.
Credit: Cathy Purcell.

DOOMWATCH FEAR FACES THE LOBSTER.

Lobsters, crabs and other shellfish may be off the world's menus in 2008. This Doomwatch warning to shellfish-lovers is given today by New Zealand atom scientist Dr. AW Fairhill.

He says in Nature, the scientific journal, that man is now burning oil and coal so quickly that the oceans are becoming overloaded with carbon-dioxide. The result: Shellfish may soon be unable to go on growing their shells - and become extinct by 2008.

Daily Mirror. 7 Sept 73.

WHALE OF A FATE.

Eighteen great whales committed collective suicide on a remote Mexico beach after their leader, wounded by a harpoon, made for land and the others followed him.

Sunday Times. 9 Sept 73.

KILLED: a jay walking shark was struck by a car as it slithered across a San Francisco street. The shark either entered the city's sewers at high tide, or fell off a truck en route to the fish market.

Daily Express. 11 Aug 73.

ghosts

DID HE SEE A GHOST?

Did an experienced coastguard and a policeman direct a lifeboat to rescue a ghost? And in broad dayilght too? The mystery of the vanishing man puzzles Derek Vine, 26, a coastguard at Eastdean, near Eastbourne, Sussex. Local men were called out to search beaches for a person reported trapped by the tide. The lifeboat was launched.

Derek, at the watch tower, spotted the man with his binoculars. "He was facing the cliff and edging around a jutting rock with the waves at his feet, " Derek said.

For confirmation, he handed the glasses to a policeman. But two coastguards lowered by ropes fonund no one. Nor did the lifeboat. The cliff is thought to be unclimbable. Derek is embarrassed. "An Excise man was lured to death by smugglers in the 18th century. Perhaps it was his ghost." he said.

Sunday Mirror. 5 Aug 73.
Credit: A. Smith.

WARNING OF A PUB GHOST.

Ex-landlord Tom Ward turned up again for an eerie midnight meeting in the cellar of his old pub. He slipped out of the shadows, pale and haggard, and gave a grim warning to the pub's new manager, Brian Withington, 31. Which shook Brian...for the old landlord had died two years before.

After his death, another landlord moved into the pub, The Malt Shovels in Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire. But he too died - in a motorway crash. Then Mr. Withington took over as manager. Yesterday he described his meeting with the ghostly Mr. Ward, who died aged 58.

He said: "I had gone to the cellar to turn off the beer when I saw a small grey-haired man standing beside one of the tanks. He was stooping, and his face was pale and drawn. His lips moved as though he were trying to say something, but incredibly, his words came from my own mouth: "Take care of yourself."

Mr. Withington was later visited by the dead man's son. 29-year-old Colin Ward, who said: "One theory is that my father's spirit is not at rest and reappeared to warn Mr. Withington to take care following the two deaths."

News of the World. 17 June 73.

A BOOT THAT WENT BUMP AT THE BEEB.

Something went bump in the night at the Beeb. It was a well-aimed left boot belonging to radio News reader James A. Gordon. He threw it at a ghost that appeared at his bedside in a room provided for night-shift news readers in The Langham, a BBC administration building.

Gordon fled clutching his trousers and right boot, and spent the rest of the night in his office across the road at Broadcasting House. None of his colleagues laughed when he told them about it - for two other news readers, Ray Moore and Peter Donaldson, admitted they have had the same experience. Moore says:"I have seen the figure twice, it is like a bright white light. It is a big thick-set man with his hands behind his back." Donaldson said;"I woke up to find a force trying to push me out of bed The curtains were closed but there was a glowing light inside the room."

The Langham was once a hotel; parts of it are centuries old. The ghost is seen only on the third floor, where the overnight accommodation is. "The whole floor is very moody at night", said Ray Moore. "Two of the Commissionaires wont go near it after dark. Sometimes if you press the third floor lift button, it goes shooting up to the sixth. But only at night."

Daily Mirror. 1 Aug 73.
Credit: BR Bates.

A GHOST WHO COMES TO DINNER.

When the dinner-party conversation dies at the Kensington Church Street house of Sue Griffiths, a model, it is because another guest has joined the party - a ghost she thinks she has in the house. Says Miss Griffiths, 21; "I've lived here for nine months and I've seen the ghost of a little girl dressed like Alice in Wonderland in a pinafore and petticoat. She's a very pleasant ghost and seems to like me, and a friend of mine, Maggie Mansfield, a model who used to live here too.

"During a meal we would often stop talking together and look at each other. If other people were there we wouldn't say anything, but if we were by ourselves, we would say 'She's here'. The other guests noticed nothing. At night she plays little tricks, like rotating the chandeliers or rattling a decoration of sea-shells. I have some toys and children's games in the house including my great grandmother's teddy-bear and some thimbles. I think she likes them. Most are in the spare room and while I'm there I get the strongest feelings of her presence."

Maggie Mansfield, 20, says:" When I was at a meal with Sue, I often felt that someone else was there. Not a creepy sensation. Just a pleasant awareness of someone else."

Sunday Express. 12 Aug 73.

'heavens above'

THE TUNGUSKA 'METEORITE'.

In a recent letter to the editor, Philip Ledger wrote:

'The Tunguska explosion of 1908 which destroyed forest over several hundred square kilometers of Siberian Taiga, has been attributed to many causes. Assumed at first to have been a meteorite, it soon became a lump of snow - an enormous block of ice - of iron - of rock - a comet (1) and, more recently, the explosive end of an unknown visitor from space (2). But now 'science' has at last given us a credible answer - it was a black hole from space (3). Yes, a hole weighing 10^{20} grams, and yet only millionths of a meter in diameter. Moreover, what goes in must come out, so the authors predict a smaller set of shock waves where the hole emerged from the earth'.

1) Zolotov, AV. (1967) Sov. Phys. Doklady, Vol.12. p108.
2) Von Daniken, E. (1969) Chariots of the Gods. p151.
3) Jackson, AA. & Ryan, MP. (1973) Nature. Sept. 14. Vol. 245. No.5420.

We also saw the following note in the Novosti Bulletin No. 14124. (1 Aug 73):

EXPEDITION CONTINUES STUDY OF 'TUNGUSKA METEORITE',

Expeditions of Tomsk University, the Astronomic and Geodetic Society and the Commission on Meteorites of the Siberian branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, have started work near the settlement of Vanavara in the basin of the Podkamennaya Tunguska to continue studying the area that was hit by what has become known as the 'Tunguska Meteorite' on June 30, 1908.

Scientists have for a long time been trying to explain the fall of the 'meteorite' and its explosion, which had a force equal to that of several thermonuclear bombs. Many things still remain to be explained, but bit by bit expeditions which are continuing the work year by year are unravelling the mystery. It is believed now that it was not a meteorite but a small comet which disintegrated at a distance of several kilometers above the earth.

Scientists are studying a vast marsh south of the epicentre of the explosion where it is highly possible that fragments of the comet may be found.

A COMET FOR CHRISTMAS.

Scientists are thinking of sending an unmanned spacecraft to observe the new comet Kohoutek when it approaches the earth next Christmas. The comet is named after German astronomer Lubos Kohoutek of Hamburg who first spotted it as a smudge on a telescopic film more than 18 months ago. The comet is expected to be so bright when it arrives that it will be visible even in daylight when the sky is clear.

Astronomers reckon that it will be ten times brighter than any previously observed comet. Its tail they say could be up to 30 million miles long. Kohoutek is hurtling towards us at an estimated speed of 26 miles a second. The closest it will come to the earth (between December and January) will be 75 million miles; and it may be thousands of years before it reappears after a long looping journey through the solar system. In the hope of gaining close-up photographs and other scientific information reports Science Digest, American scientists are considering sending the spacecraft to rendezvous with the comet; perhaps even to run along with it for a while.

Sunday Express. 16 Sept 73.

hoaxes

SHOWPIECE RIDDLE OF WIRED-UP DAHLIAS.

Everything in the garden was lovely as the championship dahlia show reached its thrilling climax. First prize in the small cactus variety went to the breathtaking display by local Champion Cyril Gardiner. It was his third win in three years giving him the coveted trophy outright. Mr. Gardiner, of Birchwood Road, Bristol, left the West of England Dahlia Society Show at Plymouth with congratulations ringing in his ears.

Then a spectator accidentally brushed against one of the winning dahlias, and the head fell off revealing . . . a length of wire. Officials found that eleven more heads were supported by bits of wire stuck up their stems. Now the society has asked Mr. Gardiner to return all his trophies from this years show. And it has asked the National Dahlia Society to ban him from all future contests.

A show spokesman said: "Anyone can turn dahlias into prize exhibits by putting wires up their stems. " He said wired dahlias had been found when the exhibits were cleared away after previous shows, but officials had been unable to trace the culprits.

Mr. Gardiner said last night: "I don't know anything about a wired dahlia at the show."

Daily Mirror. 31 Aug 73.

GHOST THAT KILLED.

Dusk was falling as the mourners gathered round the grave. As 67-year-old Boleslav Mierzhov was lowered in his coffin and the priest prayed, there was a sudden commotion.

In the dim light, a white figure seemed to rise from the grave, falter over the mourners and then vanish. Mierzkov's 62-year-old widow screamed and then dropped dead from fright. Police at Sosnowiek, Poland, however, refused to believe in ghosts, and started to search the cemetary. They soon found in the sexton's loft a life-sized doll dressed in a white sheet, together with 100 yards of nylon line.

The sexton told the police that Mierzkov's son-in-law, Wieslac Walczak, had paid him 2,000 zloty to work the trick at the funeral 'to teach his mother-in-law a lesson'. He was jailed for fifteen years.

Sunday Express. 16 Sept 73.

THE GREAT ATLANTIS SAGA - OR IS IT A HOAX?

The recent reports of the discovery of Atlantis by the Ancient Mediterranean Research Association (AMRA) has attracted widespread coverage and quite shameless hoots of derision from most quarters of the press, who nevertheless have pursued the story relentlessly. The News is able to offer the following condensed sequence of events from its files which (it is hoped) may place the story into some kind of perspective.

The news of the expedition broke on the 6 July, as the AMRA team headed by Mrs. Maxine Asher leave New York en route to Cadiz. The Daily Mail of that date quotes Mrs Asher: "I simply know we will find it because I am psychic. O God, how strong the vibrations are these days." 42-year-old Mrs Asher, reportedly a teacher at Peppardine University, Los Angeles, hocked her family jewels for £30,000 to float the expedition. Most of the 70 members of her team are supposed to be psychic also, and have donated about £1000 each, and been promised 6 credits for the six week expedition.

Those readers who are aquainted with Fort's 'LO!', will know the great suspicion he cast on scientific discoveries which were found in the place predicted. Perhaps Mrs. Asher really did precognize the site of her Atlantis, or see it clairvoyantly; we would like to remain openminded about it in principle. However, the papers (eg. Daily Mail) announce, almost ten days later:'Found - Lost City of Atlantis', on the 18 July. Evidence of roads and columns were said to have been found 'in the exact place described by the Greek philosopher Plato'. The expedition co-director, Dr. Julian Nava, Professor of History, California State University, says no more details would be given until underwater photos could be studied by the team.

Next comes a brief and emphatic UPI note in the Observer on the 22 July: That the Spanish police have stepped in and halted everything. The AMRA team are said to 'claim to have photographed the roads, columns and walls, 95 feet down and 14-16 miles out from the Spanish coast'. Oh yes. It also says that Atlantis vanished 14,000 years ago.

In the Daily Mail for July 30 is a feature by Jane Gaskell, who puts the cataclysm date at 11,000 years ago. She gives the interesting information that Dr. Egerton Sykes, the 'tall, snow-haired, vigorous' 78-year-old British archaeologist, is in Cadiz 'now'to observe what transpires. The Spanish officials are being difficult because the diving-permits were 'incorrectly applied for' and insist anyway, that 'it is impossible for the team to have found anything new. It is well known the area here is full of Roman remains. Dr. Sykes is said to believe that what is being found is far older. "The water level here changed about 8000 years ago, and obviously before that, this large village or city was already here, or in a well-advanced state." But he goes on to caution: "All this need be nothing to do with Atlantis." There is also the additional information, via Mrs. Asher again, that the columns posess 'strange rubrics'.

The denouement comes from a (justifiably) cynical piece in Newsweek for 6 August. Mrs. Asher is described as a 'part-time mystic...who dabbled in parapsychic phenomena' and 'decided the search for the Lost Continent was her mission in life after a book on Atlantis tumbled from her bookshelf during a 1971 earthtremor.' Julian Nava is reported to have quit, two days into the expedition; and Pepparding University is revealed as a small Los Angeles liberal-arts college. Besides the 25 students at $2000 each, 'she enlisted (at $2800 apiece) two dozen mid-fortyish divorcees and widows anxious for a summer of cultural enrichment and adventure.' Well, they got it allright. When the highly skeptical Spanish Government stepped in - Mrs. Asher vanished.

In Cadiz, an expedition spokesman, John Sims, admitted to Newsweek reporter Scott Sullivan that the discovery was an 'illusion'. 'Her original story had been that,on July 18, 3 members of the team diving 14 miles off Cadiz, found signs of ancient streets and broken columns. At first Sims stuck to this story. But Olga Vallespin, a young archaeologist assigned by the Spanish Ministry of Education told Sullivan that she doubted the divers had made the alleged descent. A student then said she saw the press release two days before the alleged find was made.' And for those who are interested in such things,the name AMRA figures strongly in the 'sword & sorcery' fictions of the late Robert E Howard set in the antideluvian era of Atlantis and Valusia.

'As for the irrepressible Mrs, Asher, when tracked down by Newsweek in Dublin, she refused to discuss the students she had left behind in Spain. Mrs. Asher merely stated she was preparing to leave for the west coast of Ireland with a new group of 20 Irish students - to continue her search for Atlantis.' (Credit for most items: Steve Moore.)

No promises - but, keep watching this space.

human curiosities

BRITAIN'S SMALLEST WOMAN DIES.

Miss Joyce Carpenter, known as Britain's smallest woman,died at her home at Bromsgrove today. She had been very ill for some time, said her brother.

Miss Carpenter, who was 43, and who led a very active life, was only 29 inches in height. About two years ago she passed her driving test in a specially converted car. At Easter, she drove to Weston-super-mare and back to her home in Grafton Crescent on the Charford Estate in her Mini. Miss Carpenter used to drive to many parts of the country in her capacity as a member of the Small Peoples Association.

She had an interest in the arts and crafts, and was a leader of a Brownie Group. A funeral service is to take place at St. Andrew's Church Charford, at 11 am on Friday.

Birmingham Evening Mail. 7 Aug 73.

DOCTORS FIGHT FOR WOLFBOY.

Doctors are fighting a tough battle to bring a little boy back to civilisation after living most of his life among wild animals. The boy, aged about six, was found by a shepherd in a cave in the rugged Abruzzi mountains in Central Italy. He walked on all fours and bit anyone who came near him. And doctors at Milan hospital think he may have been suckled by wolves. Attempts to trace his mother failed, and two attempts to civilise him in foster-homes ended in disaster.

Sun. 15 Aug 73.

Shortly before, another wolfboy was discovered in Ceylon - or rather, a monkeyboy (see the Sunday Mirror. 24 June 73). Then both cases were discussed in an article by Peter Watson in the Sunday Times:

THE NEW 'WOLF CHILDREN'.

After an interval of twelve years,1973 is turning out to be another year for a curious anthropological event - the discovery of 'wolf-children'. Theyare young children found living in the wild in remote areas, allegedly brought up, in some cases even suckled, by wild animals. Since 1344, when the first case was formally recorded,there have been 53 such children, allegedly reared by everything from wolves and bears to leopards and panthers. The last case (a gazelle-child) was in 1961.

This year has already seen two. In June, a boy aged about 12 was found living with monkeys in the jungles of southern Sri Lanka (Ceylon). He was named Tissa after the village near where he was found. The boy cannot speak, but barks and yelps, crawls on all fours, and when at ease, reclines in a monkey-like posture. And last week Italian paediatricians and psychiatrists have debated whether Rocco (named after the rocky crag in the Abruzzi mountains where he was found) really was brought up by wolves. He too is speechless, grunts in a 'half-wolf, half-goat' way, and bites and claws at anyone who shows him affection.

Exotic as these children are,there is considerable doubt as to whether these 'animal' characteristics are really animal at all. Wolf children seem to be of three basic types. There are those who are mentally deficient and often physically handicapped as well. Usually, it seems, they have been abandoned by their parents when they find their child too much of a handful. These children spend little time in the wild - they would be incapable of surviving for very long. They walk on all fours, not because they are imitating animals they have lived with, but because their bones allow them to walk no other way. The same applies with their speech: they have small brains and so are capable of only monosyllabic grunts and growls.

There are also those suffering from a very ill-understood ailment, early childhood autism. Probably in these cases the parents just do not know what is wrong with their child and again it is abandoned. Severely autistic children in Britain will crawl around on all fours, grunt or growl, and even eat their food on the floor, animal-like. But in their case there is no known reason why they do this: they have the physical equipment to behave normally. But mentally retarded and autistic wolfchildren rarely change their habits once back in civilisation, and this suggests that their 'animal' qualities are something they were born with and not due to their experience in the wild.

Possibly most interesting are those who were abandoned, not because of something wrong with them, but because their parents for economic or emotional reasons of their own, simply cannot cope with children. In these cases it seems that the children really may live in close proximity to, if not actually with, wild animals and imitate their habits. Two Indian children, for example, discovered living near wolves some years ago, always slept curled over one another. Quite often such children develop superb physical skills. A Syrian gazelle-child discovered by a local prince on a hunting party, was said to be capable of running at 50 mph with the gazelles. He also had superb eyesight and very acute hearing.

These children, although they may not be able to talk when found, who may even lap milk from a plate like a dog, readily adapt to civilisation and do learn how to talk, eat and wear clothes, sometimes within months. Unfortunately, both Tissa and Rocco appear to be mentally retarded.

Stunday Times. 26 Aug 73.
Credit: Steve Moore.

THE OLD LADY WHO HASN'T SLEPT IN 30 YEARS.

For more than 30 years a little old lady in a Spanish village has gone without sleep. In that time she has never dozed for a second, nor gone to bed,but has still managed to stay healthy.

Now her husband's recent death and a growing nervous frustration had led an eminent surgeon to appeal to specialists in London and New York to help her.

The sad case of Señora Ines Fernandez, 57, started on a warm afternoon on July 8, 1943. She was standing at the door of her cottage in Sierra de Fuentes, near Caceras, south-west Spain, watching a religious procession. "I suddenly yawned and a searing pain went through my head, " she says, "And since then I have never slept. I have taken thousands of pills and medicines and consulted many doctors, but nothing has been of any use.

"There were long agonising nights sitting in my armchair next to the bed watching my husband sleep soundly. Now he's gone and I can't stand the terrifying lonliness of the night."

Señora Fernandez always changes into a white dressing gown at nights - but only to sit in the chair with her feet on a stool clutching a rosary. She used to embroider and read but now even that is gone because of her poor eyesight. "I just pray for the morning when daylight comes and I can do my work." She runs a nursery from her home and takes in 20 children a day.

In her 30 years without sleep she has been treated by Dr. Padlos Abril, a neuro-surgeon. He says: "I have never known a case like this. I now think an operation would be useful but it would have to be in England or America where such specialist clinics exist."

The Doctor describes her condition as chronic colesistites and total insomnia. He said the sleep section of the brain appears to be permanently impaired.

Robin Chapman, science correspondent, writes: A London doctor said that cases of this kind were extremely rare. The cause was probably of psychological origin rather than due to any physical illness. But it could be cured by a brain operation.

Sunday Express. 26 Aug 73.

RIP VAN JOE GOES ZZZZZ AND HIS WIFE CALLS 999.

Crane driver Joe Green's 40 winks in the sunshine turned into a nightmare yesterday - for his wife. After missing his lift to work, Joe, of Valley Road, Pudsey, Yorkshire, sat for a while on his garden wall. But he fell into a snooze and keeled over on to the lawn. And there he stayed.

When his wife Alice tried to rouse him he just slept on and on and on. Even the neighbours couldn't rouse him. So, thinking that Joe might have collapsed ill, Alice dialled 999. But the ambulancemen who dashed to the scene got a ticking off from Joseph for waking him up.

An ambulance spokesman said: "We received an emergency call to the house, but he was found only to be sleeping, and was rather annoyed because we disturbed his slumber. Said Joseph: "My wife often has trouble waking me even in the mornings. I could sleep even on a clothesline."

Daily Express. 8 June 73.

Senora Fernandez should have his troubles. We have no room here but with reference to Joe's statement about sleeping on a clothesline, we shall see in the next issue a story of a man who slept on a tightrope 82ft up.

A GIRL GULPS DOWN A FORK.

Waitress Pat Yearsley had a tickle in her throat. So she tried to scratch it with a dinner fork. Then, gulp ... she swallowed the eight inch fork. Pat, 20, who works at the Trefeddian Hotel, Aberdovey, Merioneth, said yesterday: "Everybody thought I was joking. Even the hospital doctors did not believe it at first. Then they took an X-ray and realised I was not having them on.

Then doctors operated on Pat, from Widnes, Lancs, to remove the fork, and she spent 11 days in the hospital. Now Pat has an eight inch scar across her stomach. But she was not allowed to keep the fork. She said: "The surgeon wanted it for his private museum. He said he was frightened I might swallow it again."

Sun. 24 Sept 73.

MAN IMPALED.

A man impaled through the throat when he fell from the balcony of his home in Pimlico, London, was 'satisfactory' in hospital last night.

Sun. 28 May 73.

NAKED TARZAN IS CAUGHT.

A real life Tarzan has been captured in an African game reserve. Rangers swooped at dawn on the naked man's tree lair in Tanzania's lion-infested Mikumi Reserve. They found him whimpering like an animal. He was unable to talk. This mysterious man who had defied several previous capture attempts, had apparently lived in harmony with the park's animals, living on berries and fruit. Now he is being kept in a cell while police try to identify him.

Daily Mirror. 7 Jan 1969. (?).
Credit: A Smith.

jinxes & curses

CHURCH CURSE WILL HOUND IVORY THIEF.

The Rev. Harold Cheales devised an unusual way of preventing valuable objects in his church from being stolen. He placed a curse on them.

The 62-year-old Rector placed the curse earlier this year from the pulpit of the Church of St. Laurence at Wyck Rissington (pop. 160) near Cheltenham, Glos, to render its victim accident prone and bring him nothing but bad luck. Only if the thief returns the object can the curse be lifted. Mr. Cheales said:" Thefts from churches have become very widespread lately, although it had not happened here before. However I decided to take precautions, and included a curse against anyone stealing from this church. Now someone has taken the ivory

carving depicting two angels taking the body of Christ down from the Cross. It is about 10 in. high and 4 in. across. He would be well advised to return it quickly.

"What makes it specially interesting is that it must be one of the largest lumps of ivory in the world. No animal alive today could yield that much, and is thought to have come from the tusk of a frozen mammoth. It was insured for a nominal £50, however its true value may well run into thousands of pounds." The rector used a little known service for the first day of of Lent called 'Commination' which contains 10 curses against wrongdoers and allows the priest to add a few of his own.

Could the curse cause the death of its victim? Mr. Cheales said :"It will not cause harm in that sense. His death would undo the whole point of the curse which is to give him a chance to put things right. I have had much experience lifting evil curses from people who are the victims of witchcraft cults. I myself would never be vindictive like that. But I certainly believe these curses work". A Church of England spokesman at Church House, Westminster, said: "It is very rare for the 'Commination' service to be used now. In fact we have never heard of its happening before."

Sunday Express. 2 Sept 73.

SIKH SAYS: "I'LL BEHEAD THUGS."

Vandals who wrecked a Sikh temple in Glasgow for the second time in two days received a dire warning yesterday. Mr. Pritan Singh, an ex-Indian Army colonel, said: "I will be there every night, and if these infidels return I will cut off their heads. They will be dealt with in the normal manner. Their headless bodies will drape the trees surrounding the temple."

Daily Mirror. 11 Aug 73.

lightning

LIGHTNING KILLS 3.

Lagos, Friday. - Three evangelists were struck dead by lightning during a service.

Daily Express. 22 Sept 73.

LIGHTNING BLAST KILLS GOLFER. (1).

A golfer was killed, and six others injured, when lightning blasted a tree as they sheltered from a storm yesterday. The dead man, Mr. Michael Poole, 50, of Wellington Road, Taunton, was playing at the local Vivary Park course. His six companions were knocked unconscious by the blast. They are recovering in hospital. One of them, Mr. David Whiting, 25, said last night: "We were standing under a tree laughing and joking. The next thing I remember was a flash. I came to lying on the ground paralysed. People were lying all around me, including the dead man. My mate Jim Hardie got up and pulled us away and someone tried the kiss of life on the chap who died."

Daily Express. 28 Aug 73.

GOLFER WHO WAS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING DIES. (2).

A golfer who was struck by lightning on a Birmingham golf course a fortnight ago has died in hospital from his injuries. Robert Broadmore, 18-year-old assistant professional at Harborne Golf Course, was struck as he was walking along the fairway of the 12th hole. His home was in Chase Grove, Erdington.

Sunday Mercury. 30 Sept 73.

Some however are luckier...

FAMOUS CONDUCTOR.

Park Ranger Roy C Sullivan of Virginia, has been on the phone to the Guinness Book of Records. They'd better make a fast revision, he said, as he'd just been hit by lightning for the fifth time. As the most lightning-struck person in the world, Mr. Sullivan has a reputation to keep up.

Daily Mail. 28 Aug 73.
Credit: Steve Moore.

'mass hysteria'

SCHOOL HIT BY MYSTERY BUG.

A mystery illness which hit a school's pupils and staff yesterday is being investigated by health officials.

Seven teachers and 135 children stayed away from Hinchley Wood primary school at Esher, Surrey, after being taken ill in the night. Headmaster Bill Kinnock said last night: "The illness is peculiar in that it seems to be restricted to my school. No one at the Secondary School next door has been affected.

"It has nothing to do with school meals, which come from the secondary school's canteen. And a lot of the children taken ill do not stay for lunch. The local Medical Officer sent his Inspector who will spend the weekend trying to find the cause. He believes that it is a virus and I

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hope it is one that lasts for only 24 hours."

Daily Mirror. 31 March 73.

TUMMY BUG HITS 10,000 A DAY IN NAVY CITY.

Doctors are baffled by a mysterious bug affecting up to 10,000 a day in Britain's biggest naval base.

It causes severe stomach pains, sickness, diarrhoea and headache. "The sum total of human discomfort it causes must be considerable," said a health official at Portsmouth.

So far scientists have made hundreds of tests with no result. They've attempted to grow the bug in laboratory samples and failed. "We've investigated every one of the saner theories put up by the public," the official said. "We have established it's not the water - and we're pretty certain it didn't come from abroad."

The plague has been raging since the start of the summer. Portsmouth City Health Dept believe that up to 5% of the population is affected at any one time. It is hoped that the outbreak will die away naturally. Sufferers are being advised not to handle food and to drink a lot of liquid - but not alcohol or fizzy drinks.

Shellfish imported from Japan were blamed for a similar outbreak which hit the Christchurch area of the South Coast last month.

Sunday Mirror. 12 Aug 73.

HOLIDAYMAKERS TOLD OF MYSTERY BUG.

BY Michael Jeffries.

An epidemic of gastro-enteritis - source unknown - is hitting parts of South East Hampshire on a serious scale. At Portsmouth, where 600 new cases are being reported each week, it is believed to have contributed to the deaths of four people.

Cases are occuring in areas around the city such as Gosport, Fareham and Havant. The disease has mystified local health authorities who have appealed to the Department of Health and the public to help find the cause. Holidaymakers and visitors to the city should be on the alert. The disease, which can be caused by food poisoning, produces symptoms of acute stomach pains, sore throat, diarrhoea and vomiting. Dr. Peter Roads, Portsmouth's Medical Officer of Health, said:"If people develop serious symptoms they should go directly to their doctor."

London Evening News. 31 Aug 73.

SCHOOLCHILDREN HIT BY A MYSTERY BUG.

A mystery bug is giving Britain's schoolchildren hand, foot and mouth disease, a health watchdog body reported yesterday. The disease causes painful ulcers around the mouth and on the hands and feet said the Public Health Laboratory Service. In a warning to all doctors, they said that the disease may be more widespread than the 107 cases so far confirmed.

The counties hardest hit are Norflok, Somerset and Gloucestershire. One primary school had 11 of its 200 pupils go down with the disease. The Service group also asked doctors to help track down another mystery bug which is hitting the Portsmouth area. They have called it the X Bug and it causes diarrhoea and vomiting. A party of women who went on a day trip to Portsmouth were all struck down by the X Bug nineteen days later.

Daily Mirror. 3 Sept 73.

occult crimes

Several times in his four books, Charles Fort brought himself up and said that (unfortunately) he had no time to develop an 'Occult Criminology'. The News has decided to give the idea room to develop and will be publishing anything 'suspicious'.

£250,000 PAINTING RIDDLE.

A painting worth nearly £250,000 has disappeared without trace. The picture, a Degas showing a group of women washing clothes, was aboard a Swissair flight from London to Zurich. But when agents went to collect the painting, which is about three feet square, it could not be found.

Hurried checks were made at the airline and with London. Scotland Yard's art squad was instantly alerted. Widespread inquiries by airport police failed to produce anyone who had seen it. A spokesman for the agents said last night:" As far as we can discover, it was loaded on the plane. It did go."

Sunday Mirror. 24 June 73.

INVISIBLE GIANT.

Thieves at Lutterworth made a slow getaway yesterday - in a 16 ton bright yellow mechanical digger they stole from a building site. But nobody saw them go.

Daily Express. 7 Feb 73.

plant curiosities

SECRET ORCHIDS.

Ten thousand wild orchids have been found growing wild in a disused iron-ore quarry near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Naturalists are keeping the location a secret.

Daily Express. 19 Sept 73.

poltergeists

FAMILY FLEE FROM 'GHOST'.

A frightened family quit their council flat yesterday - because of ghosts. Steelworker Arthur Allan, his wife Jennifer, and their three children walked out of their Middlesborough, Teeside, flat. Mr. Allan, 26, claimed the place

was gripped by a magnetic force which had sent him crashing through a glass door.

The Sun. 27 July 73.

ripley or not!

COUNTRY CASHES IN ON SCUM.

A hidden word is pushing up the price of 50 rupee banknotes in the Seychelles. A Joker has written the word 'scum' into the design - making them collectors pieces.

Sun. 24 Sept 73.

UNCLE CHAO STRIKES AGAIN.

The Academy of Liars will celebrate its 225th anniversary next month in the tiny village of Moncrabeau, in south west France, where it was founded by an imaginative old monk. A grand competition is planned. All entrants will tell a story and villagers will judge which one is the most outrageous, and the winner will be crowned 'King of Liars'.

Daily Mail. 9 July 73.
Credit: Steve Moore.

FORE....AND PLONG!

Golfers Mrs. Vivienne Berry, 60, and Les Johns, 63, both holed in one on the same day at the same par-3 second hole at Bridport and West Dorset golf club.

Sunday Express.. 26 Aug 73.

scientific curiosities

VOLCANO ERUPTS AFTER 160 YEAR REST.

Mysterious black dust which descended on a Japanese fishing boat near the Kurile Islands came from a volcano which erupted for the first time in160 years,the meteorological agency reported in Tokio today. The magnetic black dust alarmed the fishermen when it fell from a dark cloud about 40 miles long and 3 miles wide.

The volcano,on the southern Kurile island of Kunashiri, between Japan and the Soviet Union, erupted on Friday night. Its last reported eruption was in 1812. The Soviet news agency Tass said yesterday that the volcano, named Tyatya, belched flames and showered surrounding areas with stones and ash, causing nearby settlements to be evacuated.

Express & Star. 16 July 73.
Credit: A Smith.

FANCY THAT.

The faithful at St. Augustine's were baffled by a phantom organist who played every day except the Sabbath. The 'ghost' was traced to a Royal Navy radar beam from nearby Yeovilton, Somerset. It was tuned in to the electric organ - but switched off every Sunday.

Daily Express. 5 Sept 73.

VOLCANIC ACID LAKE.

Soviet scientists have begun exploring a volcanic lake which is filled with a mixture of sulphuric, hydrofluoric and hydrochloric acids and not water. This is believed to be the strangest and most dangerous lake on the Kamchatka peninsula and it lies in the crater of the Maly Semyachik volcano. Its stony shores are 200 metres high and the lake can only be reached with the help of a rope.

There is absolutely no vegetation around the crater because of the suffocating gasses escaping from it. The scientists have to work in gas masks. They sail on the acid-filled lake in rubber boats which, however, soon become unfit for use.

The lake is 140 metres deep. Hot acid keeps com coming up from its bottom. The golden film collected from its surface becomes a piece of sulphur when wrung out and it instantly blazes up when taken near a fire.

Novosti Information Service Bulletin 14225.
29 Aug 73.

NEW SPECIES OF FLIES.

The 200 horseflies in the San Francisco office of Cornelius Philip are welcome visitors. Mr. Philip is a tabanidologist who has found 250 previously unknown species in a 50-year career. He says :"It's like stamp collecting. You try to find somebody who has one you want and do a trade."

Daily Express. 1 Sept 73.

ufos

ITS UFO TIME again in the deep South and non-sceptics should make their way to Sandersville, Georgia, where our friends have been showing up with almost monotonous regularity. Some are red, some are green, some blue and gold. But none it seems actually wants to set foot on our planet. I don't blame them, although astronaut Pete Conrad says he's sure they are benign.

Daily Mail. 8 Sept 73.
Credit: Steve Moore.

TROOPS FLEE AS SAUCER DIVES.

Two American military policemen saw a 'flying-saucer' swoop down on their car in Savannah, Georgia - then it chased them as they fled back to base. The UFO had flashing lights and dived to tree-top level, said the patrolmen. Later police in nearby Manchester also said they saw it.

Daily Mirror. 10 Sept 73.

witches, etc.

NEW TALE OF THE SALEM WITCHES.

Witchcraft hysteria swept the Massachusetts seaport of Salem nearly 3 centuries ago. Now the

witchtrial evidence, which sent 20 people to their death,is finally being published. An old English record of courtroom testimony details the fear that gripped the village in 1692, when teenaged girls said they had been put under spells. Within a year, 19 people had been hanged and one crushed to death.

The formal charge against the accused witches was the practice of 'certain detestable arts called witchcraft and sorcery wickedly, maliciously and feloniously used, practised and exercised at and in the town of Salem.' Included in the trial records is Benjamin Hutchinson's statement that his wife was tortured by a witch.

"My wife was much afflicted after the last execution with violent pains in her heart and teeth and all parts of her body, she being in such excessive misery that she said she believed she had a spell cast upon her. Whereupon I went to Mary Walcott, one of our neighbours,to come and look to see if she could see anybody upon her; as soon as she came into the house she said that our two neighbours - Sarah Buckley and Mary Whitheridge - were upon my wife; and immediately my wife had ease and Mary Walcott was tormented."

Mary Walcott, aged 16 at the time, was one of the group of teenage girls who would scream, cry and go into convulsions, claiming they were being attacked by invisible witches. The girls later named the witches as friends and neighbours ranging in age from a child of 5 to a grandmother.

Express & Star. 14 July 73.
Credit: A Smith.

WITCHES KILLED MY CAT, SAYS POP STAR.

A pop star is threatening legal action against a witches' coven because his cat was killed in a sacrificial ritual. And last night the leader of the witches admitted: "We killed the cat - we thought it was a stray."

Animal-lover Long John Baldry lost his two year old tabby, Stupzi, over a week ago. Now he has discovered it was the victim of a weird Ceremony of the New Moon, in Highgate Woods, North London.

Said the 6ft. 7in. tall singer at his home in Muswell Hill, London, last night:" This lot needs locking up. If the police and animal organisations are not prepared to take legal action, I will prosecute them myself."

The witches claim that killing the cat was a necessary part of the ritual as a sign of homage to their deity. Said 33-year-old David Farrant, president of the British Occult Society:" Shedding blood is essential and it was dabbed on the forehead of the eight witches present. We have used many cats in the past and will do so in the future, no matter what the outcome of this incident. I know it sounds ridiculous, but I am also an animal lover at heart."

Daily Express. 7 Sept 73.

You're right Mr. Farrant, it does sound ridiculous. The corrolary of Fortean studies seems, inescapably, the formidable chronicles of human foolishness in all its wide variety - but we publish the stories for whatever we find in them - and it is our feeling that the children in the next story display the only sane attitude to it all:

UNLUCKY 13th FOR WITCHES.

A Friday the thirteenth duel between two witches featuring a ceremonial cat sacrifice was banished by the powers of the Police and RSPCA.

One witch was seen running away from Hampstead Heath pursued by hundreds of laughing children. The other witch didn't turn up.

Sunday Mirror. 15 April 73.

news

FAR-SIGHTED LECTURES.

Local authority-sponsored lectures on UFOs start today at Bournemouth where a council spokesman said: "There is tremendous interest in UFOs - it's time to take them seriously."

Daily Express. 17 Sept 73.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT.

A course on haunted houses and hiding holes is being organised at Pendrell Hall, near Wolverhampton, by the Staffordshire County Council college of adult education.

Daily Express. 19 Sept 73.

LETTERS

From next issue on, we hope to be carrying a letter column - so please write, at the very least, about any way that the News could be more helpful or interesting. We are eager to help in any way on private research, and will publish short notices from readers wanting specific aid or information,freely, as long as it is reasonably short and to the point. We will endeavour to do our best on readers queries though we claim no infallibility.

All letters to the editor will be considered for publication (or parts thereof) unless the author specifically states his wish against it.

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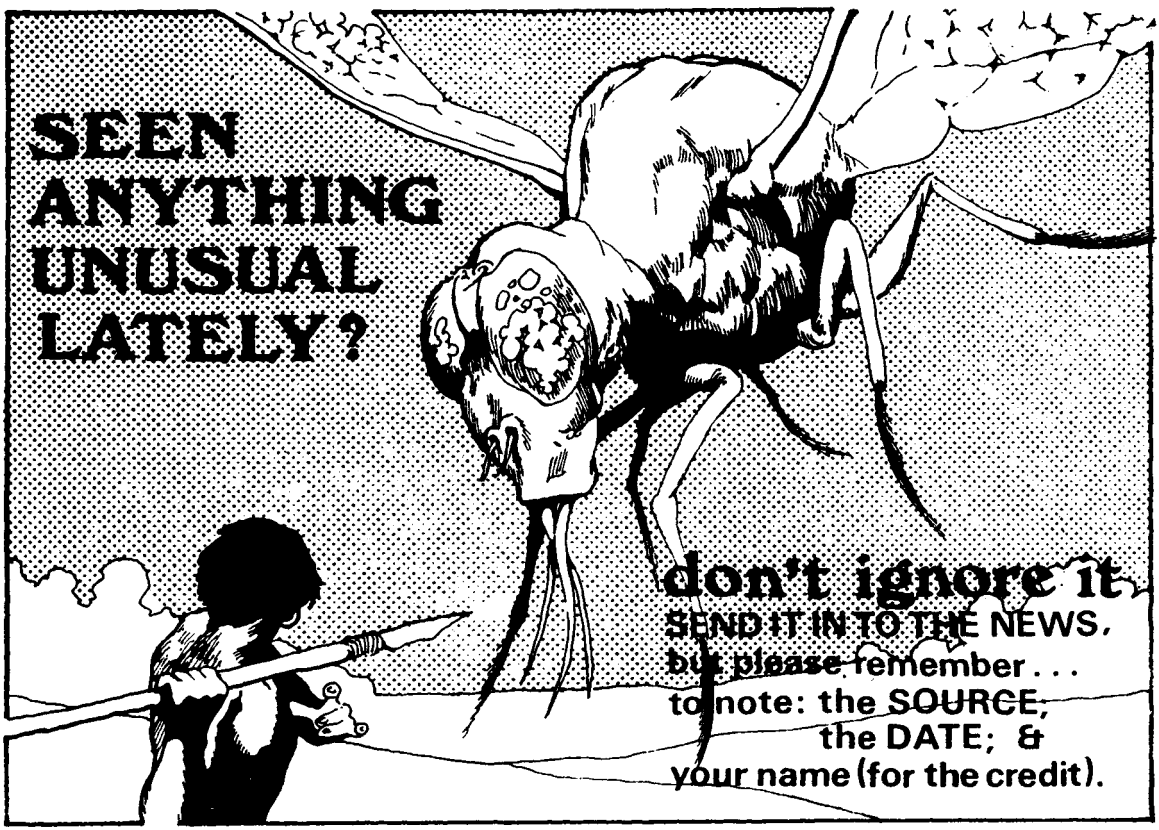
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